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INTELLIGENCE AIDE DENIES CBS REPORT

U.S. Officer in Vietnam Denies Blocking Enemy Strength Estimate at Libel Trial

By M. A. FARBER

A lieutenant general who was a key figure in military intelligence in the Vietnam War yesterday denied allegations made in a CBS documentary that he blocked reports of high North Vietnamese infiltration and ordered subordinates to "tamper" with computer data on enemy strength.

Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, testifying as the 10th witness for General William C. Westmoreland in his \$120 million libel suit against CBS, also said he had never been ordered by superiors to falsify intelligence during his service as a colonel in South Vietnam in 1967 and 1968.

The thesis of the 1982 CBS Reports documentary was that officers at the "highest levels" of American military intelligence had conspired to "alter and suppress critical intelligence" on enemy strength in Vietnam in the year before the Tet offensive of January 1968.

The purpose of the conspiracy, according to the documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," was to make it appear that the United States was winning the war. The result of the conspiracy, it said, was to leave President Johnson, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States armed forces and the American public unprepared for the scope of the Tet offensive.

Says Enemy Forces "Overstated"

Yesterday, General Graham challenged the proposition that American forces were either unaware of the coming offensive or not ready for it. If anything, he said, General Westmoreland's command had "overstated" the strength of Communist forces in Vietnam in 1967.

The Tet offensive, the general said in Federal Court, was "a maximum effort" by the Communists, but they were able to muster an attack force of only 85,000 for it. That showed, he said, that the enemy strength figure carried by the American command in Saigon—250,000 to 300,000—"was in the ballpark."

General Graham, whose testimony will continue today, said the Vietcong had so "scraped the bottom of the barrel" for troops for the offensive that it had taken its own wounded soldiers from hospitals, their stitches from previous fights unhealed. Some of the weapons used by the Vietcong, he said, were still smeared with packing grease.

During a repetitive and extremely detailed cross-examination by David Boies, a lawyer for CBS, General Graham denied that the Central Intelligence Agency had a uniform position in 1967 that favored a substantially higher total for enemy strength.

Met With C.I.A. Analysts

The general, who later became chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency before his retirement in 1976, said he had attended a number of sessions in Saigon in September 1967 with C.I.A. representatives on the subject of enemy troop strength.

He said some C.I.A. officials like George Carver, the agency's chief of Vietnamese affairs, had argued for a figure somewhat higher than that advocated by General Westmoreland's staff.

The general said, however, that only one C.I.A. analyst, Samuel Adams, wanted a figure nearly double that of the military. That total would have included the enemy's self-defense and secret self-defense forces, the so-called "home guard" that General Westmoreland dropped from the official listing of enemy strength known as the order of battle.

Mr. Adams — who 14 years later became a consultant for CBS on its Vietnam documentary — was "the source for all this uproar" over enemy troop estimates at the Saigon meetings, General Graham said. These and other meetings in 1967 were held to arrive at a special estimate of enemy strength for President Johnson.

But when Mr. Boies questioned whether Mr. Adams was alone in his desire to adopt a significantly higher enemy strength estimate, General Graham said:

"It wouldn't have been much of a conference if it had just been Sam Adams against the military. We'd have rolled right over him."

C.I.A. Sought Higher Total

But Mr. Boies showed the general a 1968 State Department document that said that, as of a month before the Tet offensive, the C.I.A. wanted to put forward an enemy strength total ranging between 455,000 and 620,000.

This total, which appeared to be shared by Mr. Adams's colleagues in the agency, also included an enemy political cadre of 90,000 to 120,000 — compared to the military's figure for this category of 75,000 to 85,000. General Westmoreland's command opposed the continued inclusion of the political cadre in the order of battle, considering them more appropriately placed in an "appendix."

General Graham said he believed the political cadre, like some other Vietcong irregular forces, such as the home guard, were not really fighting forces — a position that CBS has disputed throughout the trial.

"What did they do," Mr. Boies asked, referring to the other irregular forces?

A. Made policy. Well, they collected taxes, made horrible speeches about Marx and Lenin.

Q. Like the Democrats and Republicans here?

A. Oh no, I think we called them political cadre one day and guerrillas the next, when they were robbing banks.

Q. They ever shoot people?

A. Probably.